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THE EDITOR'S FIELD-POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WHEN GROWING VEGETABLES

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THE EDITOR'S FIELD— POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WHEN GROWING VEGETABLES



There was an ice storm in the portion of the US where I live. In the span of a few seconds we went from living in the twenty-first century to living in the early twentieth century or earlier. After waiting for several hours, and as night came on, we figured we had better do something to adjust to what was happening. Fortunately, we had a fireplace and enough stacked wood to weather the weather. Getting up several times a night to stoke the fire was not fun, but it was better than waking to a cold house, and having to start the fire every morning. Heating water for hygiene in the fireplace and cooking on an outside grill in winter has some limitations that I can do without, but after a couple of days we were catapulted back to the twenty-first century when the power was restored. I now admit to being very skittish whenever the weather is reported to combine cold weather and precipitation. It requires an immense amount of time, personnel and money to recover from the results of environmental fury. Within my state, and within the path of the storm, there was a medium-sized city that took the full force of the ice. That means that the ability to pump gas and store refrigerated and frozen food in stores, and houses, ceased to exist for a time that surpassed the restoration of power; food spoiled and had to be thrown out. This meant that those who had sufficient gas in the car had to travel several miles, and back, to obtain food

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and/or gasoline. As a result the cost of subsistence increased markedly. We assume that modern technology will carry us through. This is true over the long haul, but completely fails when the power to drive the technology is measured in the amount of power that is stored in the batteries, or gas cans, that we have around our houses. The type of damage that was wrought by the ice storm is also analogous to that which can happen due to other types of catastrophic storms that can devastate agriculture. Immediate damage can occur due to the storm itself, or by interruption of the ability to harvest or process the crop. When that occurs it becomes necessary for suppliers to either find alternate sources for crops which may increase the cost of delivery of crops to consumers. What will probably happen is that other markets will have short falls of expected delivery, and costs in those markets will increase. If there are not sufficient amounts of alternative sources of products then the principles of supply and demand will become active and costs to consumers will increase. The point I am trying to make, I think, is that some argue that some vegetable crops should not be grown in some regions because they could be destroyed by the uncontrollable activities of nature. There is always the possibility of failed crops. That occurrence has been with practitioners of agriculture from the biblical plagues of locust to drought and emergent diseases that seem to be news events in some part of the US, or the world, frequently through the growing seasons. I do not remember anyone saying that because a major commodity was seriously damaged continued culture of that crop should be abandoned. What happens is that resources are marshaled to fight whatever the threat happens to be.

Vegetables are important to the human diet. The amounts of land needed to produce any specific vegetable, and likely for all vegetables demanded by the market, are less than for the vast areas required for other crops that have a higher profile and are basics of human nutrition. Vegetables, when stored for extended periods, lose the appeal of fresh market quality. Disruptions in the delivery chain to the consumer can cause immense losses to someone in the chain. That raises the question about where vegetable crops should be grown. There are some limitations that restrict certain crops in some locations. As long as technology, and the desire of producers to pursue different opportunities, exist then it should be up to the individual grower to accept the possibility of failure and to reap the possibilities of success.

REVIEWS OF SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS

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